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DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
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SUBJECT: GOSS VICE PRESIDENT MACHAR ON ELECTIONS AND ICC

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) Vice President Riek Machar maintains that the SPLM has committed itself to elections at all costs, and that the party has refused to allow itself to be held hostage by declining implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The VP claims to have been tasked to reach out to the NCP to influence their thinking on Bashir and thereby improve the SPLM's competitiveness at the national level. Machar said he believes President Bashir's political career is over, but noted the President nonetheless used his Juba visit to launch his presidential campaign against &his only true competition.8 He dismissed ICC-related &doomsday scenarios8 about the abrogation of the CPA and demise of the nation, noting &Garang fell and Sudan continued, so it will with Bashir.8 END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) In a meeting with ConGen staff August 29, GOSS VP Machar rejected concerns over the slow pace of border demarcation, asserting &we will not hold elections hostage for anything( we will go forward with elections because they will usher in a new political system in Sudan.8 He similarly eschewed reservations over the possibility of renewed controversy over the census come December, noting his belief ) as the South's point-man on elections ) that voter constituencies did not have to be delineated on the basis of census results. The upcoming 2009 elections, despite the complexity of 12 separate ballot papers in an otherwise illiterate South and 8 ballot papers in the North, he argued, were essential for Sudan's return to democracy. (COMMENT: In essence, Machar argued that elections ) and their attendant requirements (national-level legislative reforms, security requirements, etc.) have re-ordered the CPA's timeline ) and at least in his opinion made some elements more malleable. Not everyone in the party shares his forward-leaning views. END COMMENT.)

¶3. (SBU) Machar stressed that the groundwork was being laid for elections despite evident delays. While not yet decreed by President Bashir, the parties had reached consensus on not only the NEC chair and vice chair, but also - as a result of negotiations led by SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum - on the seven remaining commissioners. While hesitant to disclose names, the VP allowed that two Southerners and five Northerners &broadly representative8 of the North had been agreed upon and endorsed by Presidents Bashir and Kiir. Additionally, the parties had reached agreement on the composition of the Council of Political Parties. An announcement will be issued &any day now,8 he claimed.

¶4. (SBU) The Vice President believes Bashir used his visit to Juba to launch his presidential campaign against &his only

true competition<sup>8</sup> (the SPLM,s Salva Kiir). Indicative of just how much the Bashir visit to Juba went off the rails, however, Machar allowed that he and GNU Vice President Ali Osman Taha had agreed in Khartoum that Bashir would announce the NEC while in Juba on August 27. Machar claimed that Bashir abandoned the plan in a fit of pique when informed that his Southern schedule would not include a public rally. GNU presidential staffers had initially omitted it by accident from the schedule sent down to Juba. The GOSS Presidency, in a moment of political hardball, had decided to enact the President,s schedule &as stipulated<sup>8</sup> ) this despite attempts by the same staffers to later correct their own omission. &They did not want us to assist with his program,<sup>8</sup> Machar said with a smile, &and we were relieved not to have to deal with the possibility of banners publicly undermining the SPLM,s position on the ICC.<sup>8</sup>

¶5. (SBU) Machar was highly dismissive of doomsday scenarios linked to Bashir,s presumptive ICC indictment. &If he faces trial, he faces trial,<sup>8</sup> he said glibly, &Sudan is not Bashir, it must go on. Garang fell and Sudan continued, so it will with Bashir.<sup>8</sup> Machar maintained that Bashir,s &political career is over,<sup>8</sup> and that the SPLM is trying to send him messages to that effect. The VP claimed that the July 2008 SPLM Political Bureau formalized his own role in such an effort, and tasked him to reach out to both NCP &progressives<sup>8</sup> and hardliner Nafie Ali Nafie,s wing in order to influence their thinking on Bashir, and inter alia, the SPLM,s viability at the national level. He alluded to recent discussions within the NCP centered on the question of whether the party could, according to Machar, &tolerate Bashir enough to take them through the elections, and then

KHARTOUM 00001327 002 OF 002

have him step down.<sup>8</sup>

¶6. (SBU) Machar affirmed that the SPLM will be contesting the national presidency, but noted that opinions varied on the wisdom of Kiir,s own candidacy. According to Machar, one wing within the twenty-seven member SPLM Political Bureau believed it was ~ right<sup>8</sup> for Kiir to contest the position. Machar described this faction,s philosophy as follows: &If 2011 is what people want, we should concede the presidency to the NCP and let the people decide. What happens in the North is a problem for the Northerners to handle, not something for the SPLM to take on as a party.<sup>8</sup> Not only did Machar note that such a viewpoint represented a minority faction within the SPLM, but also underscored that the majority of the Political Bureau members had argued against such thinking, adding that &we should not give the NCP the impression we won,t run against them<sup>8</sup> ) even if Kiir himself is not interested in running.

¶7. (SBU) In a description very much indicative of Kiir,s own indecision on the matter, Machar also noted that the same majority within the SPLM leadership shot down a request by some in the party to &select and declare an alternate candidate now.<sup>8</sup> While in Juba, Bashir was reportedly equally uncertain of Kiir,s stance on the issue. On the margins of his August 27 public events in Juba, Bashir at one point turned to Kiir and stated &maybe it,s time for people to have r new leadership within the party, and it,s our job to bring up new people within these groups?<sup>8</sup> Machar claims he jumped in to fill the silence, jovially asking Bashir if he was suggesting that neither he, nor the President, should run for their respective positions in 2009. Bashir reportedly did not respond to the prod.

¶8. (C) Comment: While Kiir has indicated to some, including recent visitors to Juba, that he does not want to stand for the Presidency at the national level, according to some within the GOSS Presidency, events in Abyei and the ICC have increasingly made him more open about the possibility. It remains clear that in order to keep the pressure on the NCP and not abandon their restless constituencies in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile (and to a lesser extent further

north,) the SPLM will continue to say that Kiir will run for the national presidency, while waiting until closer to the elections to make a definitive decision.

FERNANDEZ